

CHAPTER 8. LAYOFFS

SUBCHAPTER 1. PROCEDURES

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4A:8-1.1 General

(a) An appointing authority may institute layoff actions for economy, efficiency or other related reasons.

1. Demotions for economy, efficiency or other related reasons shall be considered layoff actions and shall be subject to the requirements of this chapter.

(b) The Commissioner or authorized representative of the Department of Personnel shall determine seniority (see > N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2.4), and shall designate lateral, demotional and special reemployment rights for all career service titles prior to the effective date of the layoff and have such information provided to affected parties.

4A:8-1.2 Alternatives to layoff

(a) In State service, appointing authorities shall lessen the possibility of layoffs by offering and implementing, as appropriate, voluntary alternatives.

(b) In local service, appointing authorities should lessen the possibility of layoffs by considering voluntary alternatives.

(c) Alternatives to layoff may include, but are not limited to:

1. Granting of leaves of absence without pay to permanent employees, without loss of seniority for purposes of this Title, subject to the approval of the Department of Personnel;

2. Granting voluntary furloughs to employees (see > N.J.A.C. 4A:6-1.23);

3. Allowing voluntary reduction of work hours by employees, which may include job sharing arrangements;

4. Providing employees with optional temporary demotional title changes; and

5. Other appropriate actions to avoid a layoff.

(d) Employee participation in alternatives is voluntary. Should a layoff occur despite alternative measures, employee layoff rights shall not be diminished by their participation in any such alternative measure; that is, the employee will be considered to have been serving in the original title and earning seniority in that title.

(e) Appointing authorities should consult with affected negotiations representatives prior to offering alternatives to layoff.

(f) Appointing authorities shall submit a plan for alternatives to layoff and obtain approval from the Department of Personnel prior to implementation. The plan shall include time periods for all alternatives, a statement of the employees' right to be restored to prior status should a layoff occur during such time periods, and summaries of employee status and salary at the conclusion of time periods.

4A:8-1.3 Pre-layoff actions

(a) Appointing authorities shall lessen the possibility, extent or impact of layoffs by implementing, as appropriate, pre-layoff actions which may include, but are not limited to:

1. Initiating a temporary hiring and/or promotion freeze;
2. Separating non-permanent employees;
3. Returning provisional employees to their permanent titles;
4. Reassigning employees; and
5. Assisting potentially affected employees in securing transfers or other employment.

(b) The appointing authority shall to the extent possible lessen the impact of any layoff action on permanent employees by first placing employees without permanent status, and then those with the least seniority, in positions being vacated, reclassified or abolished.

(c) Appointing authorities shall consult with affected negotiations representatives prior to initiating measures under this section.

(d) Upon request by an appointing authority, assistance may be provided by the Department of Personnel in implementing pre-layoff measures.

4A:8-1.4 Review by Department of Personnel

(a) At least 30 days prior to issuance of layoff notices, or such other period as permitted by the Department of Personnel, the following information shall be submitted by an appointing authority to the Department of Personnel:

1. The reason for the layoff;
2. The projected effective date of layoff;
3. Sample copies of the layoff notice and the projected date for issuance;
4. The number of positions (including position numbers in State service) by title to be vacated, reclassified, or abolished and the names, status, layoff units, locations and, as of the effective date of the layoff, permanent titles of employees initially affected, including employees on leave;
5. The vacant positions in the layoff unit (including position numbers in State service) that the appointing authority is willing to fill as of the effective date of the layoff;
6. A detailed explanation of all alternative and pre-layoff actions that have been taken, or have been considered and determined inapplicable;
7. A summary of consultations with affected negotiations representatives; and
8. A list of affected negotiations representatives, including addresses and the units they represent.

(b) In local jurisdictions having a performance evaluation program approved by the Department of Personnel, the appointing authority shall also submit the names of permanent employees who have received a rating below Commendable or equivalent in their permanent title within the 12-month period preceding the effective date of the layoff.

(c) Following submission of the information required in (a) above, all vacant positions identified in (a) 5 above shall be filled, except under exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Commissioner, and may only be filled through layoff procedures.

(d) Upon review of the information required to be submitted in (a) and (b) above, or in the absence of timely submission of such information, the Commissioner may take appropriate remedial action, including:

1. Requiring submission of additional or corrected information;
2. Providing needed assistance to the appointing authority;

3. Directing implementation of appropriate alternative or pre-layoff measures; or
4. Directing necessary changes in the layoff notice, which may include the effective date of the layoff.

(e) Upon approval of the layoff plan, the Department of Personnel shall provide affected negotiations representatives with a copy of the plan as it affects their represented employees.

4A:8-1.5 Layoff units and job locations

(a) In State service, the layoff unit shall be a department or autonomous agency and include all programs administered by that department or agency. An autonomous agency is one which is in, but not under the supervision of, a principal department.

(b) In local service, the layoff unit shall be a department in a county or municipality, an entire autonomous agency (see > N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2.1(c)1i), or an entire school district. However, prior to the time set by > N.J.A.C. 4A:8-1.4 for submission of information to the Department of Personnel, a different layoff unit consisting of one or more departments may be approved by the Commissioner under the following procedures:

1. A request may be submitted by an appointing authority to the Commissioner or the matter may be initiated by the Commissioner.

2. Notice of the request shall be provided by the appointing authority to affected negotiations representatives upon submission to the Commissioner.

3. After receipt of the request, the Commissioner shall specify a period of time, which in no event shall be less than 20 days, during which affected employees and negotiations representatives may submit written comment and recommendations.

4. Thereafter, the Commissioner shall issue a determination approving, modifying or rejecting the proposed layoff unit, after considering:

- i. The need for a unit larger than a department;
- ii. The functional and organizational structure of the local jurisdiction;
- iii. The number of employees, funding source and job titles in the proposed unit;
- iv. The effect upon employee layoff rights; and
- v. The impact upon service to departmental clientele and the public.

(c) In State service, the Commissioner of Personnel shall determine job locations within each department or autonomous agency.

1. Each job location shall consist of a county.

2. The Commissioner of Personnel shall assign a job location to every facility and office within a department or autonomous agency.

3. See > N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2.2 for exercise of lateral and demotional rights within job locations. See > N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2.3 for exercise of special reemployment rights within job locations.

(d) In local service, the entire political subdivision is the job location and includes any facility operated by the political subdivision outside its geographic borders.

4A:8-1.6 Layoff notice

(a) No permanent employee or employee serving in a working test period shall be separated or demoted as a result of a layoff action without having been served by the appointing authority, at least 45 days prior to the action, with a written notice personally, unless the employee is on a leave of absence or otherwise unavailable, in which case by certified mail. If service is by certified mail, the 45 days shall be counted from the first date of notice by the United States Postal Service to addressee. A notice shall also be conspicuously posted in all affected facilities of the layoff unit. A copy of the notice serviced on employees shall be provided to the Department of Personnel and affected negotiations representatives.

1. In State service, the Commissioner may order a greater period of time for written notice to employees.

(b) The notice shall contain the following:

1. The effective date of the layoff action; and

2. The reason for the layoff.

(c) The appointing authority shall be responsible for keeping records of those employees receiving the layoff notice.

(d) A layoff shall not take place more than 120 days after service of the notice unless an extension of time is granted by the Commissioner for good cause. If a layoff has not taken place within 120 days of service of the notice, and no extension has been granted, new notices must be served at least 45 days prior to the effective date of the layoff.

(e) Layoff rights and related seniority determinations (see N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2) shall be based upon the scheduled effective date of a layoff. These determinations shall remain applicable even if the effective date of the layoff is extended. However, when the scheduled effective date is extended, the appointing authority shall notify the Department of Personnel of employees who successfully complete their working test periods prior to displacement. The Department of Personnel shall then redetermine only the special reemployment rights to reflect the newly attained permanent status.

(f) Following determination of layoff rights by the Department of Personnel, permanent and probationary employees affected by a layoff action shall be served with a final written notice of their status, including a statement of appeal rights.

1. Employees notified of their separation from service due to layoff shall be informed of vacancies in other State departments or agencies, to which an employee, if qualified and if rated Commendable or above in the most recent final PAR rating, shall have a right to accept an appointment in lieu of separation. Should an employee accept an appointment to such a vacancy in lieu of separation, the employee shall forfeit any special reemployment rights that he or she would have had.